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EARLY DUTCH INFLUENCE ON JAPANESE ART

(Dutchmen as Netsukes)

In the admirable collection lent by Mr. Edmund G. Hamersly to the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, which originally was made in Japan by his brother, are five ancient ivory carvings (netsukes) quite remarkable in their subject and execution. Each represents a Dutchman, three bearing birds (two of which are unmistakably cocks), one an animal and the fifth, a musical instrument resembling the flageolet.

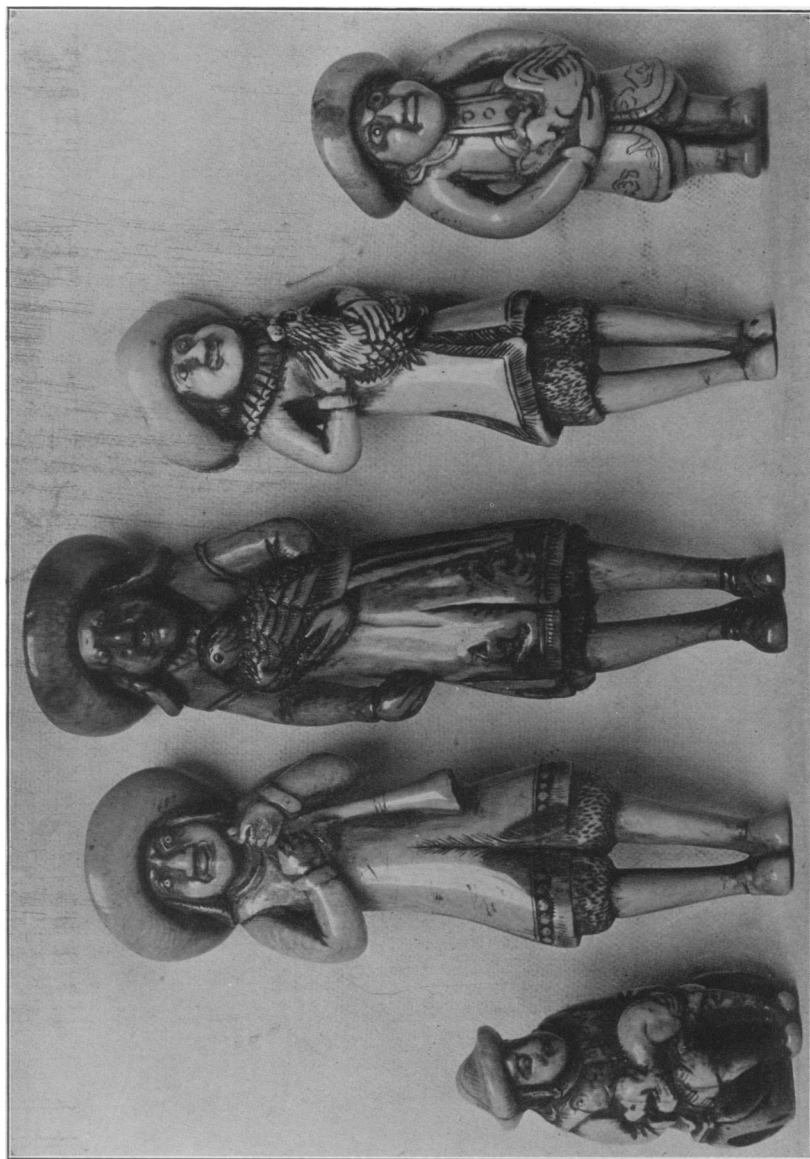
Shortly after these interesting pieces were brought to the attention of the writer, the opportunity offered to submit the three larger and more characteristic specimens to a well-known authority of recognized competence on Japanese subjects. To the learned scholar, however, they were unfamiliar. He could throw no light upon them other than the obvious fact that they represented Dutchmen, as seen by the Japanese and as reproduced by the artist. This encouraged the belief that they were sufficiently rare to warrant publication.

An inquiry made of the collector merely brought the information that he had obtained the netsukes in Japan some years ago; that they were then already very rare and were not secured without considerable trouble; that he had purchased all that he was able to find. He added that he doubted whether any, now, could be discovered in Japan unless upon the sale of the collection of some Japanese collector. The accompanying illustration gives a very accurate idea of the figures, which range in height from four and one-eighth inches to two inches.

In all but one the ivory is heavily discolored with age. All are much worn down by time. There are certain archaisms, especially in the three larger specimens, such as the treatment of the eyes, which are interesting; and the dress (one of them wears a ruff) takes one back at the latest to the seventeenth century.

After the discovery of Japan by Europeans (about 1542),* when the Portuguese Fernandez Mendez Pinto was driven thither by storms in a Chinese junk and landed in Kinshiu, his companion Zaimoto taught the Japanese many things, notably the use of gunpowder and of firearms. At this period, the nation was friendly to foreigners. Even their religion was welcomed, the early missionaries to Japan being Portuguese. Of the opening thus made for commerce, however, the Dutch were first to take advantage. For nearly two centuries these clever merchants virtually monopolized Japanese trade, although the English established a factory in the country in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. During this period, European ornament and influence was introduced in Japanese art. Marcus B. Huish, LL.B., editor of the *Art Journal*, in "Japan and Its Art," reproduces an inro from the collection of Mrs. Dobson, the decorative motive of which is obviously taken from some old leather paper and which is of Dutch origin. The So-ken Ki-sho also contains several engravings of Dutch leather papers; and the one from which the pattern on this inro is taken and which is called here Ningiode apparently found much favor.

*Toward the close of the Ashikaga rule.



JAPANESE IVORY CARVINGS
Showing Dutch Influence

It was in 1610 that the Dutch for the first time established their rule in the Island of Java; and in 1660 the Celebes, discovered by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, were exploited by the Dutch, who drove out their predecessors. On March 20, 1602, the Dutch East India Company had been established. In Java, it founded Batavia on the site of a native town in 1619, and throughout the seventeenth century held the principal seats of commerce throughout the Indian Sea and in South Africa. The Dutch began to trade with Japan as early as 1610, and although the Island Kingdom had closed its ports to foreigners and was virtually isolated, a restricted trade was continued with them until 1854, when a commercial treaty was signed by Commodore Perry, that opened Japan to commerce.

For some unknown reason it would seem that cocks are nearly always associated with Dutchmen by netsuke carvers (Legend in Japanese Art, H. Joly, p. 46). The holding of a bird, curious as it may seem to us, is, however, not entirely confined to the Dutch and is found in netsukes of other styles; and, arguing from analogy, one would feel sorely tempted to regard the bird as in some way emblematic. The cocks represented in our specimens seem to be of the Japanese long-tailed variety. Perhaps some student of Japanese lore may some time throw light upon these singular carvings. So far the only example found that at all approaches them is a netsuke reproduced by H. Joly (*loc. cit.*). It is a carving of Baifuku (Mei Fuh), one of the Sennins, which otherwise is shown riding on a Howo bird (Phoenix). His story is that he was a Chinese Governor of Nan Ch'ang (Nansho-no-Jo), who, disgusted with the then reigning corruption, resigned his post (B.C. 14) and retired to Mount Hiko, in Yunnan, where having drunk the elixir of everlasting life, he returned to his native Show Ch'un. After a short while, some genii and a Lwan bird (Peacock or Phoenix) swooped down on him and carried him off to the Taoists' Paradise. While portraying a Japanese, the representation in ivory is not unlike that which is interesting us, the bird here is also tucked in the arm of the "Senni" and carried by him much as in the illustrated examples here given, but like our largest specimen, seems to resemble a golden pheasant. It is therefore not impossible that some symbolic meaning may attach to the birds here represented; although it is stated that cock fighting was practised from early times in Japan, at least as early as the time of Yuriaku Tenno, A.D. 465, and there might be, of course, many other reasons why the rooster should be so treated.

S. Y. S.

